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# Inland areas part of new wilderness bill

**LAND:** About 400,000 acres in the two counties would be set aside.

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WASHINGTON BUREAU

Nearly 430,000 acres of untouched public land in Riverside and San Bernardino counties would be designated as wilderness under federal legislation now being considered in the House and Senate.

The Southern California Wild Heritage Act by Rep. Hilda Solis, D-El Monte, would add 32,672 acres to Joshua Tree National Park, 17,920 acres to the San Geronio Wilderness Area in the San Bernardino National Forest and another 1,920 acres to the Bighorn Mountain Wilderness Area in the desert.

It's land unchanged by humans: no stores, no houses, not even a road. It looks the same today as it has for generations and environmentalists say they want to keep it that way.

"Every time somebody goes out there they discover something new whether it be something in the environment or something in themselves," said Tim Allyn, Southern California organizer for the California Wilderness Heritage Campaign, which is sponsored by the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations.

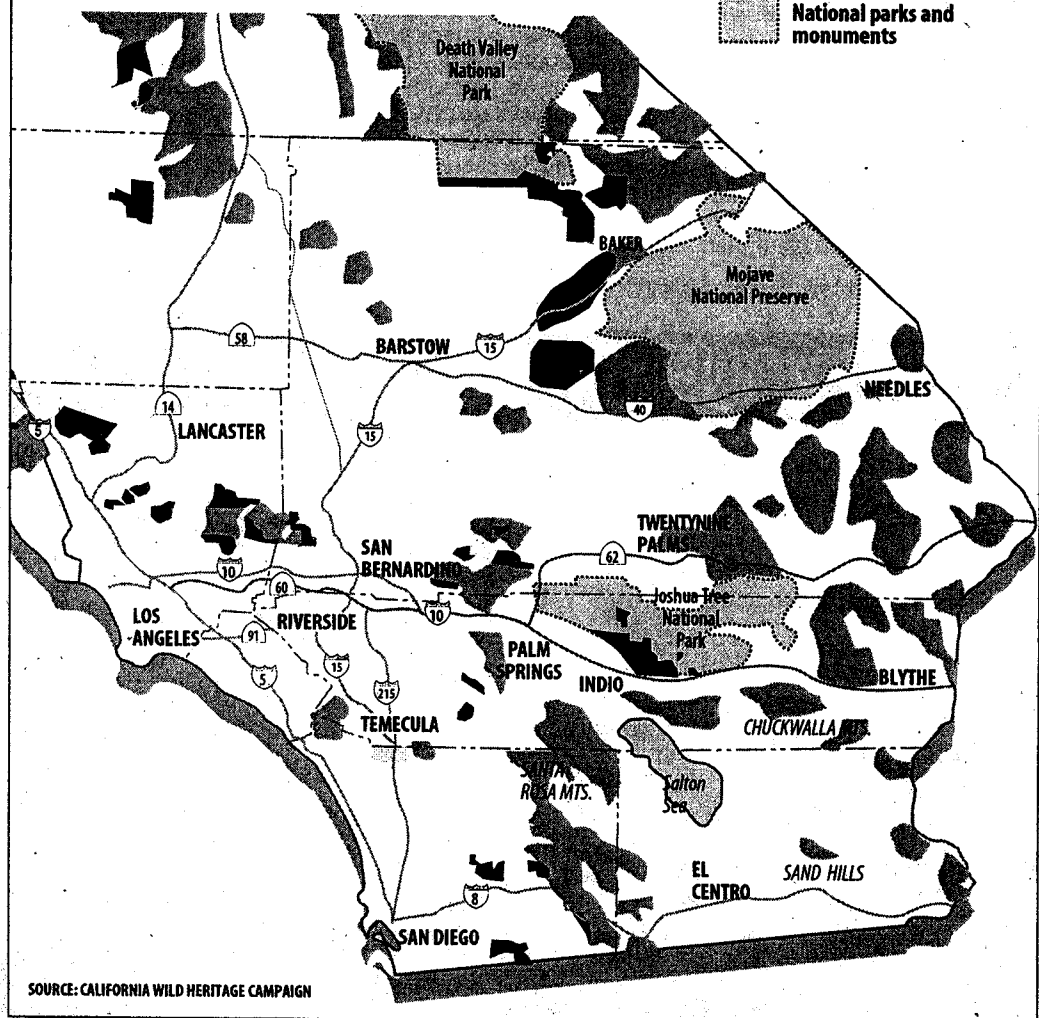
But Inland off-road enthusiasts say the legislation shuts off public access to lands for a large segment of the population.

"We're eliminating the elderly, the disabled, the young. We're pretty much narrowing it down to able-bodied 30-year-olds," said Vicki Warren of Corona, an off-roader and spokeswoman of the American Sand Association. "Once you're out of that demographic, you're done."

Solis' bill addresses 45 areas and 1.6 million acres. It is a

## Southern California Wilderness Bill

Rep. Hilda Solis, D-El Monte, announced on Tuesday legislation that would set aside 1.6 million acres in Southern California as wilderness. About 430,000 acres are in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.



BECKY HAGEMAN / THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

House counterpart to a bill introduced in May by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

Motorized or mechanized (like a bicycle) equipment is prohibited in areas designated as wilderness. Hunters, hikers, backpackers and equestrians are allowed in wilderness areas

and mining on existing claims are allowed. New mining isn't, said Jean Munoz, spokeswoman for the wilderness campaign.

That's shortsighted, said Denise Jones, executive director of the California Mining Association. She said the Mojave Desert is one of the most unique

and highly mineralized regions of the world. Mining companies need the land's resources for the future to maintain roads, highways and water infrastructure to accommodate the state's growing population.

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